

July 23, 2021

Exhibit 17



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Pipeline and Hazardous
Materials Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

June 25, 2021

Via Email

Mr. James Brown
Chairman
Montana Public Service Commission
1701 Prospect Ave, Vista Square Bldg.
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chairman Brown:

On May 24-28, 2021, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) conducted an evaluation of the pipeline safety program activities carried out by the Montana Public Service Commission (MPSC) in Calendar Year (CY) 2020. This evaluation included a review of annual Progress Report documents and pipeline program procedures and records, as well as observation of an on-site pipeline operator inspection by MPSC staff.

PHMSA conducted our evaluation pursuant to Sections 60105(e) and 60106(d) of Title 49 of the United States Code, which authorizes PHMSA to monitor state pipeline safety programs. This annual evaluation is designed to ensure compliance with the Pipeline Safety Act requirements and to provide information that will allow PHMSA to determine the state's total pipeline safety grant score for the upcoming year.

PHMSA assesses the overall performance of a state's pipeline safety program by scoring information contained in the pipeline safety program Progress Report and by conducting a Program Evaluation. Detailed results are below:

I. Progress Report Review

For CY 2020, the MPSC Gas Safety Programs scored 50 out of a possible 50 points.

II. Program Evaluation Review

For CY 2020, the MPSC Gas Safety scored 100 out of a possible 100 points.

As you may be aware, PHMSA and the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives developed a set of performance metrics that are available to the public on

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PHMSA's stakeholder communication website, <http://primis.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/states.htm>. These metrics relate to the state's leak management, incident investigations, and damage prevention program, as well as its inspector qualification, inspection, and enforcement activities. PHMSA expects each state pipeline safety program to review these metrics and act, as necessary, to continuously improve performance trends, thereby supporting enhanced pipeline safety.

PHMSA encourages initiatives to remove and/or replace unprotected bare steel mains and services and review low pressure distribution systems under the MPSC authority. According to our data, a total of 1.74 miles of protected bare steel main with a portion of that being low pressure distribution mains remain in CY2020 for Montana. The initiative to remove or protect these types of pipe will enhance pipeline safety and should be continuously monitored by the MPSC until all high-risk pipe has been removed from the operators' pipeline systems.

A reply to this letter is not necessary; however, your comments are always welcome and my address is 3700 S. MacArthur Blvd., Suite B, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73179-7612.

Thank you for your contributions and continued support of the pipeline safety program.

Sincerely,



Zach Barrett
Director, State Programs

cc: Mr. Joel Tierney, Program Manager, Pipeline Safety, MPSC
Mr. Dustin Hubbard, Director, Western Region, PHMSA, PHP-500
Mr. Michael Thompson, State Evaluator